1   1.   A method for aggregating information from a plurality of enterprises offering

2   items for exchange over a network, comprising,

3   automatedly collecting and analyzing information about said items from

4   enterprise databases associated with each of said enterprises by use of a host computer in

5   communication with said enterprises over said network,

6   storing said information collected from said enterprise databases in a host

7   database in communication with said host computer, and

8   providing a host graphical user interface through which a shopper can view, over

9   said network, said information stored in said host database.

      2.   The method according to claim 1, wherein collecting information from enterprise

2   databases includes crawling HTML page trees.

1   3.   The method according to claim 1, wherein collecting information from enterprise

2   databases includes crawling XML page trees.

1   4.   The method according to claim 1, wherein collecting information includes

2   collecting publicly accessible information.

1   5.   The method according to claim 1, wherein collecting information from enterprise

2   databases includes collecting information from auction sites offering items for purchase

3   over said network, and having associated auction databases.

      6.   The method according to claim 5, wherein collecting information from auction

2   databases includes crawling HTML page trees.

1   7.   The method according to claim 5, wherein collecting information from auction

2   databases includes crawling XML page trees.

1   8.   The method according to claim 5, wherein collecting information include

2   collecting publicly accessible information.

1   9.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising

2   periodically collecting said information about said items from said enterprise

3   databases, and

4   updating said information stored in said host database.

1   10.   The method according to claim 9, wherein updating said information stored in

2   said host database comprises updating said information stored in said host database with

3   sufficiently frequency to enable said shopper to monitor and participate effectively in

4   bidding activity at said auction sites.

1   11.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising,

2   dynamically scheduling said collecting of information from said auction databases

3   based upon content of previously collected information.

1   12. The method according to claim 5, further comprising,

2   enabling said host computer to receive an auction watch request from said

3   shopper,

4   monitoring with said host computer a bidding activity at a specified auction site

5   with regard to a specified item in response to said received auction watch request, and

6   displaying said bidding activity to said shopper by way of said host graphical user

7   interface.

1   13.   The method according to claim 12, further comprising dynamically scheduling

2   said collecting of information from said auction databases based upon content of

3   previously collected information.

1   14.   The method according to claim 12, further comprising,

2   enabling said host graphical user interface to accept from said shopper an update

3   request, and

4   updating at least a portion of said information stored in said host database

5   substantially in real-time in response to said update requests.

1   15.   The method according to claim 12, further comprising

2   periodically collecting said information about said items from said enterprise

3   databases, and

4   updating said information stored in said host database.

1   16.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising,

2   enabling said host graphical user interface to accept from said shopper an update

3   request, and

4   updating at least a portion of said information stored in said host database

5   substantially in real-time in response to said update requests.

1   17.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising,

2   enabling said host graphical user interface to accept from said shopper to enter an

3   item watch request specifying a particular item for monitoring, and

4   monitoring said auction sites to detect if said specified item becomes available for

5   bidding at said auction sites in response to said item watch request from said shopper.

1   18.   The method according to claim 17, further comprising,

2   providing said shopper with notification in response to detecting said specified

3   item becoming available for bidding, wherein said host computer provides said

4   notification by way of a host computer-initiated mechanism different from a host

5   graphical user interface.

1   19.   The method according to claim 7, further comprising,

2   enabling said host graphical user interface to accept from said shopper a market

3   watch request specifying a class of items for monitoring, and

4   detecting availability of items within said class of items at said auction sites.

1   20.   The method according to claim 19, further comprising distinguishing between

2   newly detected ones of said items from previously detected ones of said items.

1   21. The method according to claim 19, further comprising

2   providing said shopper with notification regarding detection of said items within

3   said class of items, wherein said host computer provides said notification by way of a

4   host computer-initiated mechanism different from a host graphical user interface.

1   22.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising providing said shoppers

2   with notification of host-based events by way of a host computer-initiated mechanism

3   different from a host graphical user interface.

1   23.   The method according to claim 22, wherein said host computer-initiated

2   mechanism includes a communication mechanism chosen from electronic mail, Internet

3   messaging, pager, facsimile, telephone, and Web telephone.

1   24.   The method according to claim 22, wherein said host computer-initiated

2   mechanism includes providing a hyperlink to said host graphical user interface.

1   25.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising,

2   enabling said host graphical user interface to accept from said shopper a host

3   database query specifying a class of items,

4   searching said host database for items within said class of items, and

5   displaying auction information with regard to said items within said class of items

6   to said shopper by way of said host graphical user interface.

1   26.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of specific keywords to restrict said class of items.

1   27.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of at least one category to restrict said class of items.

1   28.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of a combination at least one keyword and at least one

4   category to restrict said class of items.

1   29.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of particular ones of said auction sites to restrict said class

4   of items.

1   30.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of a particular type of auction site in which said shopper is

4   interested to restrict said class of items.

1   31.   The method according to claim 30, wherein said particular type of auction site

2   includes person-to-person auctions and business-to-person auctions.

1   32. The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling said host

3   computer and said host graphical user interface to accept from a shopper an indication of

4   a time frame in which said host computer detects that an item within said class is

5   available at one of said auction sites.

1   33.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling said host graphical user

2   interface to accept from said shopper a host database query includes enabling accepting

3   from a shopper an indication of at least one of a specific price and a price range for said

4   class of items .

1   34.   A method for aggregating auction information from a plurality of auction sites,

2   comprising,

3   interconnecting at least one host server site and ones of said plurality of auction

4   sites by a network,

5   providing at least one host database in communication with the host server,

6   searching said ones of said plurality of auction sites across said network under the

7   control of said host server,

8   retrieving auction information from said auction sites,

9   extracting data items from said auction information, said data items comprising

10   information associated with items offered for purchase by said auction sites, and

11   storing said data items within said host database.

1   35. The system of claim 34, wherein searching said ones of said plurality of auction sites

2   across said network under the control of said host server comprises searching ones of

3   said plurality of auction sites continuously on a periodic basis.

1   36. The method of claim 35 further comprising updating said host database with said data

2   items retrieved and extracted from said auction information.

1   37.   The system of claim 34, wherein storing said data items within said host database

2   comprises sorting and arranging said data items according to a hierarchy of product and

3   service categories established by said host server.

1   38.   A method for searching for products or services offered for purchase by a

2   plurality of auction sites, comprising

3   interconnecting at least one host server site and ones of said plurality of auction

4   sites by a network,

5   providing at least one host database in communication with the host server,

6   searching said ones of said plurality of auction sites across said network under the

7   control of said host server, by matching one or more keywords for said products or

8   services, by one or more of said categories associated with said products or services, or

9   both,

10   retrieving auction information from said auction sites,

11   extracting data items from said auction information, said data items comprising

12   information corresponding to said products or services offered for purchase by said

13   auction sites, and

14   storing said data items within said host database.

1   39.   The method according to claim 38, wherein said information corresponding to

2   said products or services comprises information chosen from one of a description of said

3   product or service, a name of auction site, and a type of auction.

1   40.   The system according to claim 38, wherein storing said data items with said

2   database comprises storing said data items with said database according to categories

3   established by said host server.

1   41.   The system according to claim 40, wherein said categories established by said

2   host server are chosen from one of a product or service type and a type of auction.

1   42.   The method according to claim 41, wherein said categories established by said

2   host server include a hierarchy of product and service type categories and subcategories.

1   43.   The method according to claim 40, wherein searching by one or more keywords

2   can be conducted within one or more of said categories.

1   44.   The method according to claim 40, wherein said search by categories can be

2   conducted within a subset of data items identified by a search by one or more keywords.

1   45.   A method for monitoring status of bids placed on one or more items at a plurality

2   of auction sites in communication with a network, comprising,

3   interconnecting at least one host server site and ones of said plurality of auction

4   sites by a network,

5   periodically gathering with said host server current bid information from said

6   auction sites across said network for items in which a shopper has expressed interest, and

7   providing with said host server to said shopper a current aggregated listing of said

8   items, and said current bid information for said items.

1   46. The method according to claim 45, further comprising,

2   enabling said host computer to connect said shopper to auction sites where said

3   shopper can place bids on said items, and

4   providing an indication of whether said bids placed by said shopper on said items

5   are winning or losing.